

MEXICO.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FOR

Mission Circles and Bands.

BY MRS. PERIT DULLES.

PRICE, FIVE CENTS.

PHILADELPHIA:

WOMAN'S FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

No. 1334 Chestnut Street.

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Q. Give the position, extent and population of Mexico.

The Republic of Mexico forms the great Isthmus connecting North and South America. The area is estimated at 741,800 square miles, about the same as that of the United States east of the Mississippi river, and the population at 10,000,000. Of these 1,000,000 are of pure Spanish and European descent, 5,500,000 are of Aztec descent, and 3,500,000 are of mixed blood.

Q. What is the capital of Mexico?

The City founded by the ancient Aztecs in 1335 A. D. and called MEXICO after their war-god Mex-itle. The national arms, an eagle perched on the cactus with a serpent in his talons, represents the

Aztec legend concerning the choice of its site. The city has a population (1884) of 300,000.

Q. What is remarkable about its situation?

The city stands in the valley of Mexico, 7,470 feet above the level of the sea. The valley, forty-five miles long by thirty broad, contains six large lakes, is encircled by high mountains, some of them covered with forests, others with snow, and overlooked by the majestic Popocatepetl, rising 17,368 feet above the sea, and Iztaccipuatl, "the white woman," with her spotless robe of snow. Luxuriant meadows, gardens and picturesque villas, chapels and hamlets are scattered over the valley.

The beauty of the whole scene is much heightened by the rarified atmosphere through which the mountains are seen. Although twenty to forty miles distant from the city, they appear close at hand and of an indescribable softness of tint, while the snow upon the volcanoes shines with brilliant whiteness against the dark blue of the sky.

Q. How do missionaries generally go to Mexico?

They go by sea from New York to Vera Cruz, a voyage of eleven days, or overland to New Orleans and across the Gulf to Vera Cruz. From that city since January 1st, 1873, they can reach the Capital by rail, a distance of two hundred and

sixty-four miles, in twenty-two hours. This road is one of the grandest pieces of engineering in the world. It climbs 8,000 feet to the table-land, sealing preeipices and overeoming very great difficulties, passing through scenery picturesque and magnificent beyond description.

Q. What important road has recently been eompleted?

On the 8th of March, 1884, was eompleted the Mexican Central Railroad, from El Paso on the boundary, to the City of Mexieo. The time from New York to Mexico city is now only six days.

Q. What is the climate of Mexico?

The climate and productions of Mexico depend far less upon latitude than upon elevation. A narrow strip of land bordering on the Gulf of Mexico, and a corresponding one along the Pacific are called the "*tierra caliente*," or hot region, having a tropical temperature. Next to this is the "*tierra templada*," or temperate region, reaching an elevation of 4,000 feet. Here the air is pure and bracing, and the temperature resembles that of Southern Europe. Above this rises the "*tierra fria*," or cold region, attaining an elevation of 8,856 feet and a temperature of 45° to 67° F.

Though Mexico extends into the torrid zone, at least three fifths of the eountry enjoy a temperate climate. There are only two seasons, the "rainy

season," beginning about May, and lasting three or four months, and the "dry season" comprising the remainder of the year.

Q. What of the natural wealth of Mexico?

Humboldt said, "This vast empire, under careful cultivation, would alone produce all that commerce collects together from the rest of the globe." Besides the extraordinary wealth and variety of its mineral resources, its precious stones and exquisite marbles, the soil is known as the most fertile in the world. Sugar-cane, coffee, cocoa, tobacco, rice, cotton, vanilla, an endless variety of fruits and splendid forests of many woods abound in the "*tierra caliente*." These are followed in the colder regions by wheat of the finest quality and other grains, *frijol* or bean, (which is as much a national dish with the Mexicans as the potato is with the Irish), the prickly-pear, and the remarkable "*maguey*" or Century plant.

Q. Describe the maguey.

It is a sheaf of immense sword-shaped leaves, often more than twelve feet in length. From it are made rope, paper, thatch, fuel and even wearing and sewing materials, also, the great beverage of the country called *pulque*.

Q. How is the pulque produced?

When the maguey plant is eight or ten years old and about to bloom for the first time, the cen-

tral stem is cut out, leaving a cavity which fills up rapidly with the sap which otherwise would have nourished the flower. Daily for three or four months, the juice is removed, and after producing about one hundred and twenty gallons, the plant dies.

In a few days after being drawn the juice ferments and becomes *pulque*, which has about the strength of cider.

Q. What other use is made of *pulque* ?

From it is distilled *mezcal*, which is a strongly alcoholic liquor, nearly as stimulating as whiskey. Outside of the valley of Mexico, where *pulque* is preferred, *mezcal* is the drink which causes the greatest amount of intoxication.

Q. Name some of the fruits.

Besides oranges, bananas and pine-apples, there are many choice fruits, such as the mango, chirimolla, aguacate, guava, tuna, the fruit of the cactus, (of which there are many delicious varieties,) and many others. The peach, vine and olive are also cultivated.

Q. Mention some of the animals of Mexico.

The number of cattle, especially horses, asses, and mules is enormous. The two last-mentioned have heretofore been the chief means for transportation, and are also employed for working the mines. The horses, originally of Arab blood, are

small, but well-shaped, and noted for speed, endurance and easy pace, making them delightful riding horses. Some of the birds are very beautiful, especially the humming bird, whose brilliant plumage supplies the material for feather-work, a Mexican industry from earliest times.

Q. Describe the Mexicans.

In calling the pure natives "Indians," it should be borne in mind that as a race, they are very different from the American Indians. A high state of civilization existed among the Mexicans at the time of the Conquest, and the extensive remains of ancient architecture, sculpture and painting show that the country was inhabited by a numerous, hard-working and prosperous people. The majority of their descendants, degraded by centuries of oppression and cruelty, are now in a miserable condition, but they are a gentle, industrious race, capable of great improvement. The fact that from among them have arisen able and accomplished patriots, who have been the leaders and reformers of Mexico, proves that the native character has elements of worth and nobility. They are of average height, well formed and very strong; with black eyes, fine white teeth and skin of an olive tint. Deformity of any kind is rarely found among them, and many of the young women are very pretty. The women of the higher classes, although not often beautiful either in

feature or complexion, are very winning, with their large expressive eyes, beautiful hair and teeth, and small hands, and they have much native grace, dignity and sweetness of manner.

Q. What have been some of the greatest sources of evil in Mexico?

For three hundred years from the time of the Conquest in 1519, Mexico was ruled by sixty-three Spanish vice-roys, and the government was one of injustice, oppression and crime. All trade with foreigners was forbidden on pain of death, all imports restricted to Spanish vessels, and the colonies were forbidden to produce any article supplied by the mother country. Taxes, duties and tithes were levied with fearful severity and every individual forced under penalty to buy annually a number of Papal indulgences. The Roman Catholic Religion and the Inquisition with all its terrors were established, and the exercise of any other religion absolutely prohibited by law.

Q. When, and by whom, was raised the first cry of independence?

In 1810, by Hidalgo, a country curate of pure Indian blood. He became the first martyr of his country's liberty. The independence of Mexico was not accomplished until 1821, and soon afterwards a Republican form of government upon the model of that of the United States was adopted.

Q. What was the condition of the country for the next thirty years?

One of constant and bloody conflict between the Church party and the Liberal party. The priesthood of Mexico, always exempt from the jurisdiction of the courts of law, levied heavy contributions from the people, under the title of parochial dues for baptism, marriage, interment, dispensations, etc., etc., by which means *they acquired enormous wealth*. From their possessions, which amounted to three-fourths of the property of the country, they received a yearly income of at least \$20,000,000.

Q. What did the Church party fight for?

They fought for the restoration of the monarchy, the maintenance of their peculiar prerogatives, the possession of church property, the re-establishment of former exactions and the continuance of the Román Catholic as the sole religion of Mexico. In this struggle they were aided by the army.

Q. What did the Liberal party determine to do?

To sacrifice all for the cause of liberty. They fought with a heroism worthy of admiration.

Q. Who appeared in the darkest hour of the history of the nation?

Benito Jnarez, "The Washington of his country." He was of humble native parentage. After unremitting application to his studies and taking a course of law, he became, in 1856, the leader of

the "War of the Reform." From this time the struggle was sustained between the Church on the one side, with its wealth and military power, countenanced by foreign nations, and on the other the People, without money, without army, but inspired by patriotism and the consciousness of a just cause.

Q. What important changes took place?

Under the influence of Juarez and his compatriots all the orders of mendicant friars and nuns were suppressed, all church property, with the exception of cathedrals and parish churches, confiscated to the State, and the famous Article XV., passed, "which established the absolute freedom of all religious creeds." In 1858 Juarez was recognized as President.

Q. What further trial awaited the struggling Republic?

The clergy, impoverished and disheartened by the Liberals' successes, looked for help across the sea. In 1861 began what is known as the "French Intervention." The French, relying for support on other nationalities, established an Empire, but it was unsettled and short-lived. On the 19th of June 1867, the Emperor Maximilian was executed, the French having retired under an ultimatum from the government of the United States, and Juarez again unfurled the flag of the Republic in the National Capital.

Q. What is now the political organization of Mexico?

The Republic of Mexico consists of twenty-seven states, one territory, and a Federal District. The President's term lasts four years, and an interval of four years is required by law before re-election is permitted.

Q. What is the condition of the government at present? (1885.)

General Diaz the present President, whose term began December 1st, 1884, has encouraged the building of railroads and telegraphs. Persons of all colors are admitted to equal civil and political rights, but until more is done for the enlightenment of the masses, there is reason to fear a revival of the power of the church which would be fatal to the permanence of Republican institutions.

Q. What is the religious condition of Mexico?

Travelers of all nationalities and creeds speak of it as "deplorable beyond description." The Roman Catholic Church of the United States, modified by the pressure of Protestant opinion and customs, can give us no idea of the religion as it exists in Mexico. The religion of the majority of the people is as distinctly idolatrous as that of Pagan countries.

Q. Describe their churches.

Many of them are fine old Spanish buildings possessing great riches, although since 1860 much

of their wealth has been appropriated by the State. The magnificent cathedral in the city of Mexico was begun in 1573, by order of Philip II., of Spain, and occupies the site of the Teocalli, the temple of the Aztec war-god. At the base of one of the towers stands the stone calendar of the ancient Aztecs. The high altar is made of silver and covered with crosses and ornaments of pure gold; it is enclosed by an extensive balustrade with sixty-two statues used as candelabras. Both the railing and the figures are made of a compound of gold, silver and copper, more valuable than pure silver. The gorgeous vestments worked for the cathedral by order of Queen Isabella may be seen to-day; they are of cloth of gold adorned with numerous choice gems. In this city alone there are forty-six other churches. But the effect which might be produced by architectural beauty and wealth, is lost by the introduction of ridiculously incongruous articles, gaudy ornamentations and cheap hangings of every description.

Q. Describe their images.

They are very numerous and frequently attired in a grotesque and inappropriate manner. The Saviour and the Saints are represented in every style of raiment, from that worn by the wild Indians to suits finished in the most extravagant and fashionable patterns—from mere rags to velvet mantles embroidered with gold and jewels. Offerings of thanksgiving consist of fine clothes and costly pieces of jewelry.

Q. How are these images regarded by the people?

With superstitious reverence. To doubt their miraculons power is regarded as little less than blasphemy.

Q. Give an illustration on this point.

The Virgin Mary, whose images are by far the most numerous, is called by various names according to the places where she is said to have appeared. The most famous is the "Virgin of Gaudalupe," proclaimed the patron saint of Mexico by Pope Clement VII. The following is a short outline of her history. In December of 1830, the Virgin appeared on two occasions to the pious Indian Juan Diego on the barren mountain of Tepeyac. She told him that she had determined to become the patron saint of the Mexican Indians, and ordered him to tell the bishop that she wished to be worshipped at the foot of that mountain. Juan was required by the bishop to give a token of his mission, and on the 12th of December the Virgin appeared to him the third time and told him to ascend the mountain, cut roses, and bring them to her. He obeyed, although he knew the mountain to be perfectly barren, found the roses, and brought them to her. She threw them into his "*tilma*" and said, "Return once more to the bishop and tell him that these flowers are the credentials of your mission." "When he found him-

self in the presenee of the prelate, he unfolded his *tilma* to present the roses, when lo! there appeared on the garment that blessed picture of the Virgin which now, after centuries, still exists without having suffered the slightest injury." The church was built, and is the most famous in Mexico. The sacred picture in a frame of pure gold is on the high altar receiving the adoration of multitudes. The massive railing of solid silver around the altar, is one of the few treasures spared by the Liberals. More than one half of the women of the country are called "Gaudalupe," and the image is found in every house. On the anniversary of this miracle a great festival is held and attended by all, including the archbishop and high officials, and orations are made by distinguished men in commemoration of the event.

Q. What use does the church often make of images?

This is best illustrated by another celebrated image, the "Virgin of Remedios." On the morning after the "*noche triste*" (the "sad night" when the Spanish were expelled from the Capital), one of them found a small doll in a maguey plant, and proclaimed it to be a miraculous image of the Virgin and a token of success. Afterwards a church of great wealth was built on the spot, and the little lady, dressed in satins embroidered with pearls, emeralds and diamonds, was called the "Virgin of Remedios," or "remedies," be-

cause she appeared at so critical an hour. To this day she is the patroness of all in misfortune. She is hired out by the day in times of distress, often for enormous sums. Images of less power can be had for less money, and a sick bed is not infrequently surrounded by a number of them. At the beginning of the disease, if the people are poor a cheap image is hired, perhaps for twenty-five cents, but as the gravity of the case increases more powerful saints must be brought at any cost. During the war of independence the Spanish fought under the banner of the Virgin of Remedios and the Mexicans under that of the Virgin of Gaudalupe.

Q. What of their religious ceremonies?

Their ceremonies, like other parts of their religion, are made up of fantastic shows mingled with relics of barbarism. During many of their religious festivals, masquerades, Indian dances and fireworks are permitted.

Q. What of their clergy?

For more than three centuries they had the wealth and power, without opposition or interference. The degraded, wretched condition of the natives, the errors and superstitions which fill the land show what they have done for Mexico. One of their faith says, "everywhere among the priests are found men who make an infamous traffic of religion."

Q. Describe how the poor natives live.

In many parts of the country they live in hovels on the bare ground with only a hole for a door. Their clothing is coarse and scanty, their food consists of the "*tortilla*" with *frijoles* (beans) and *chile* (pepper). The "*tortilla*" is the only bread of the great mass of the people; it also serves as platter, and takes the place of spoons or forks among the poor. It is made of Indian corn softened by soaking in water and ground on the "*metate*" (a stone), with a long roller. The dough is patted into large thin cakes which, when cooked, are sufficiently tough to serve for the above mentioned purposes.

Q. Describe the manners of the Mexicans.

They are noted for great politeness, even among the lowest classes, and also for hospitality. Their manners are warm, cordial and affectionate. On meeting they always embrace, and in the street the ladies salute gentlemen by lifting the right hand, inclining the head toward it and gracefully fluttering their fingers.

Q. Mention some of their customs.

Smoking is universal, though among the women the habit is diminishing. The ladies use little cigarettes, placed in delicate holders of silver or gold. Music and dancing come naturally to them. No freedom of social intercourse is allowed to the young, and courtship is carried on under difficulties.

Q. What other peculiar custom can you mention?

The mournful tolling of the cathedral bell announcing that the last sacrament is about to be administered to the dying. This is often done with great pomp. After death the body is laid in an open bier and, surrounded with flowers and lighted wax candles, is placed in the entrance of the house to be seen from the street.

Q. What is the dress worn by the lower classes?

The men wear a white cotton shirt and trowsers, the *sarape*, a gay woven blanket with a slit in the centre for the insertion of the head, and a broad straw *sombrero* (hat). A few wear sandals, but the majority have no shoes or stockings of any description. The women dress in a plain skirt with a colored band, a short waist, leaving the neck and arms bare, and the *reboso*, a cotton scarf usually blue and white, about a yard wide and three yards long with a wide fringe at the ends. The "*reboso*" covers the head and is crossed at the lower part of the face; it also serves for carrying "baby," who is strapped by it to the mother's back.

Q. What is the national costume of the upper classes?

At home the European dress is used, but for riding the men wear a short dark jacket embroidered with yellow, over an embroidered shirt,

leather trousers adorned on the outer seam with rows of silver coins, a bright sash with a revolver, and a large felt *sombrero* embroidered with silver thread and adorned with cord and tassels of gold or silver. In the street the ladies wear the graceful mantilla. The love for jewelry pervades all classes.

Q. Describe the houses of the better class of Mexicans.

They are built of stone or brick, often plastered and gaily frescoed; usually they have only two floors, but as the ceilings are eighteen to twenty feet high, the effect is that of three story houses. All the front windows have balconies, which during festivals are tastefully draped, and at night hung with colored lamps. A large open space in the centre of the house, called the *patio*, is planted with trees and flowering plants. Into this *patio* open the doors and windows of the various apartments. The flat paved roof (*azotea*), affords a pleasant retreat. The upper story is the one used by the family, the lower being occupied by the carriage-house, servants, etc. Sometimes the upper story of the houses is made to project considerably and is supported on arches, thus forming the "*portales*," so that the side walks within the arches are protected from sun and rain. In these *portales* are found stands with every variety of merchandise sold by the Indians.

Q. What are some of their amusements?

The ordinary conclusion of the day is visiting the theatre or the opera. Bull-fights, cock-fights, and gambling are indulged in by all.

Q. Is public sentiment at all aroused against such displays?

Recently bull-fights have been prohibited by law within the limits of the Capital and in the State of Zacatecas. Unfortunately the authorities have not been rigid in the enforcement of this law. This barbarous spectacle takes place on Sunday afternoon, when the immense arenas are crowded with thousands of men, women and children. Five bulls are slain during an entertainment; horses and men not infrequently sharing their fate. The unfortunate beast is brought from the darkness of his pen into the glaring sun-light amid the sound of instruments and shouts of the multitude. After three *picadores* on horse-back with long lances, six *matadores* with red cloaks and small lances covered with gilt paper or surrounded with fire-works have exhausted their ingenuity in tormenting him, the chief *matador* steps into the arena and plunges his sword into the heart of the brave beast, to the delight of the spectators.

Q. Is gambling much indulged in?

The poorer classes have an insatiable passion for it, and even with ladies it is not an unusual

pastime. The appeals of the street vendors of lottery tickets are frequent and persistent.

Q. Is any attention given to education in Mexico?

Free schools are established in every parish, and in the Capital there are free institutions for learning various trades and professions, but at least two-thirds of the people can neither read nor write. More is being done at present to promote popular education, and some of the states are anxious to devote the necessary means for this purpose, but they are in great need of trained teachers and suitable text-books in Spanish, the language spoken throughout the country.

Q. What is the commercial outlook of Mexico?

It is most promising. Heretofore both commerce and manufactures have been impeded by the want of means for transportation, but the railroads already built, and many now in process of construction, will hasten progress in this direction. Fifteen railway lines running over the country in different directions are now either projected or under construction.

Q. What are the prospects of Mexico?

After centuries of tyranny and misrule the country is still far from being exhausted, and under the blessings of peace and good government, may become a strong nation. The majority

of the people are unenlightened and degraded, but they are susceptible of and anxious for improvement. The history of Mexico, during her brief existence as an independent nation shows that her wars and revolutions have been painful steps in her march toward liberty. But her triumph has begun and new life is entering this land.

MISSIONS.

Q. What is the present attitude of the government towards Protestant missions?

In the Capital Protestant services are held without molestation, but in other parts of the country there is perseention more or less violent, instigated by the Romish priests.

Q. What Protestant churches are established in the city of Mexico?

The Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopal and Baptist.

Q. How has Presbyterian work prospered in Mexico?

The Presbyterian mission has every reason for encouragement. The Board of Foreign Missions reports that in 1883 six new congregations were organized throughout the Southern mission. Also nine schools with ten teachers and three hundred and forty scholars. The total membership of the

principal portion of the field is given (1884) as 6,812. The boarding and day school for girls in the city of Mexico had at the end of the year five teachers, seventy-four day scholars and seventeen boarders. The Theological Seminary and the Press are doing good work.

Q. How many stations has the Presbyterian Board now in Mexico?

There are five principal stations. That of the City of Mexico, begun in 1872. Zacatecas, in 1873; Monterey, in 1877; San Luis Potosi, in 1873, and Jerez in 1880. At Villa de Cos in the State of Zacatecas there was missionary work carried on long before its connection with the Board of Foreign Missions of any church.

Q. Which of these stations has the largest local congregation?

That of the city of Zacatecas. The membership reaches six hundred and fifty, the Sabbath-school numbers two hundred and sixty on its rolls, and has an average attendance of one hundred and sixty. And yet there have not been the schools, and printing presses which have been so helpful in other fields. The only school is that organized by Mrs. Prevost, and taught by her at night in a transept of the church. It is now attended by more than one hundred members. Several of the missionaries sent to Zacatecas have been unfortunate in not being able to remain long on the field.

Before any mission was begun and for the last six years, Dr. Prevost's constant labors have been greatly blessed. Persecution does not cease and there are many among the converts who sacrifice all, even life itself, for the cause of Christ. A primary school is greatly needed, as well as helpers in this fruitful field.

Q. What of the importance of mission work in Mexico?

The importance of Christian work in Mexico at present cannot be over-estimated. "From a bigoted, intolerant country it has been changed into a liberal, progressive nation," says Señor Romero. A large proportion of the men, disgusted with the vices and mummeries of their own church, are fast being imbued with the spirit of scepticism. Wherever a mission has been established there is abundant evidence that the people are seeking the way of life, and waiting only to be taught. They are indeed "as sheep having no shepherd." "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest."

